

# THE NEGRO WORKER



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WORKERS OF THE R.I.L.U.

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# REVOLUTIONARY GREETINGS TO THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF NEGRO WORKERS

The first International Negro Conference meets at a time when the economic crisis is having the capitalist world in its grip, when the fine fables of the social democrats and the other bourgeois ideologists about the era of prosperity coming to stay have been exploded. It meets at a time when the revolutionary upheaval is spreading like prairie fire from one country to another. It meets at a time when the workers and peasants of China, India, Indo-China are heroically fighting against the forces of capitalism and imperialism.

The Conference will for the first time bring together the representatives of the Negro toilers and will lay the basis for the international unification of the Negro masses, for the organisation of their forces and for merging their ranks in the international revolutionary army struggling for the final overthrow of imperialism.

Greeting the first international gathering of Negro toilers we assure it the full support of the international revolutionary labour movement and express our confidence that the Conference will fulfil its revolutionary tasks.

*Long live the United  
Front of the workers and peasants  
of all nationalities and races!*

*Down with Robbers and  
Bloody Imperialists!*

*For a relentless struggle  
against all exploiters and oppres-  
sors!*

International Trade Unions  
Committee of Negro Workers  
of the RILU



## BLACK MASSES AND THE WAR DANGER.

The militarisation of the colonies which has reached its highest form in the French colonial policy is one of the imperialist methods of shifting the heaviest share of the war burden on the natives. The imperialists are not satisfied with the brutal economic exploitation of the colonial peoples but have succeeded by an unprecedented military policy to draw them into its war plans.

This same method was utilised by the imperialists before the world war only in a lesser degree. The black natives before schooled in the art of imperialist warfare were sent on punitive expeditions to subjugate other recalcitrant tribes, to secure conquests already gained, and to wrest vast concessions from the natives. By innumerable provocations and pitting one against the other the imperialists were enabled to expropriate entire tribes from the land.

During the World War France granted concessions to the natives of the Senegal who entered the army in the form of citizenship rights, franchise, exemption from taxes, and so forth, to make them more willing tools of imperialism. But these concessions were only given to a few. The great majority of France's black army are utterly without rights. They are underpaid, assigned the most laborious and disagreeable work and suffer brutal treatment from the hands of the officers.

Other hardships are encountered due to the climate and bad living condition. Among the Senegalese soldiers on the Rhine 82.32% are tubercular.

The black troops have been utilised in breaking strikes (in France) and in suppressing revolutionary uprisings in other colonies (Morocco, Madagascar, and more recently Indo-China). Great Britain has been considering a plan for the dispatching of the black troops to China for "the protection of British lives and property." In this way the black troops have served as a military reserve of the imperialists.

This method of using black soldiers against the white masses and vice versa is calculated to further accentuate the antagonisms and prejudices existing among them and which have been created and fostered by the bourgeoisie to prevent the joint struggle of the masses in the colonies and capitalist countries against their common oppressor.

It is only by the continuous explanation of the real character and role of the bourgeoisie that the toiling masses in the metropolitan countries and colonies can be welded together in a united front for the overthrow of imperialism.

The Soviet Union is the only country where exploitation does not exist and the right of self-determination granted to all oppressed peoples. The new world war is being prepared primarily against the Soviet Union, the fatherland of the proletariat and toiling masses. The Negro peoples must thwart the plans of the imperialists to use them as cannon fodder in the next war and together with the world proletariat defend the Soviet Union.

Wise.

**ORGANISE YOUR FORCES FOR AN ACTIVE  
STRUGGLE AGAINST CONSCRIPTION, AGAINST  
A NEW IMPERIALIST WAR!**

**DEFEND THE UNION OF SOCIALIST SOVIET  
REPUBLICS, THE ONLY FATHERLAND OF ALL  
TOILERS OF THE WORLD!**



# Down with the League of Nations and the International Labor Office, agencies of the International Robbers!

## FORCED LABOR. .....

All colored peoples throughout the world, and particularly, the Negroes, whether because of extraordinary laws or methods of direct or indirect administrative pressure are forced to labor for the imperialists or their native agents.

Forced labor takes on different forms: slavery, forced labor for public needs either of national or local significance, contract labor, labor in lieu of taxes *corvée*, peonage, etc. However, no matter whatever may be the juridical term for the different forms of forced labor, in actual fact, it is all camouflaged slavery.

Slavery is the very first form of exploitation of Man by Man; and along with the changes which were effected in the social forms, it was replaced by modern methods of exploitation, so that to-day we have it only in the more backward capitalist and uncultured countries. At the present time slavery exists chiefly in the form of so-called domestic slavery in countries like Abyssinia, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Arabistan, in some of the native Provinces of India (Nepal, Burma), China (Child slavery---*Mui-Tsui*). Altogether throughout the world there are about 3 to 4 million slaves.

The other forms of forced labor aim at providing the capitalist exploiters with cheap labor power for reaping in the biggest possible profits from the colonies and semi-colonies. Justification for applying the system of forced labor is generally to be found in the argument that the natives are naturally lazy, and that by compelling the primitive peoples to work the governments are training them to work systematically.

The closest similiarity to slavery has the system of forced labor. In a whole number of colonial countries the law obliges the natives to work every year a certain number of days, generally not more than 60, without any pay, on public works (of a State or local character.) In actual fact these laws in the colonies, where the capitalists are carrying on large-scale operations for laying roads, melioration, railroad construction, etc., all of the able-bodied adult population is engaged in this work, regardless of the fact whether it is carried out by the Government or by private companies. Women and children are also not spared and are sent to do auxiliary work or local work. The labor and living conditions of those mobilised for this compulsory work are such that they die by the tens of thousands. Every railroad which is being laid or other large construction works are actually sown with bones of the perished forced laborers. Only last year much noise was raised in the whole international press about almost 20,000 workers who perished in Equatorial Africa on the construction of the Brazaville-Ocean railroad. This is not an exception, in view of the fact that the railroads in East Africa and other colonies have cost the native population not any less.

Another form of forced labor is taxes in kind, when the native population is taxed by the imperialists with definite taxes which are supposed to be paid not in money, but with those products which are most valuable in the given colony. The best example can serve the system applied in the Belgian Congo, when the natives were obliged to hand in to the Government officials in payment of their taxes a certain amount of ivory,



**palm oil**, etc. If this was not carried out the defenceless natives would be punished severely and at times whole villages would be exterminated.

At the present time taxes in kind have practically everywhere been replaced by money-taxes, in view of the fact that with the further development of exploitation of the country, the exploiters are chiefly in need of cheap labor power. Hut and Poll taxes, taxes for the right to live in the given locality, etc., are so high that if the native had the possibility of selling all of his belongings, his harvest from his miserable plot, even then he would not be able to pay them in full. The tax compels him to work on any conditions and for any amount. In case the native fails to pay his taxes, he is imprisoned and then, as prisoner is sent to work for the capitalists.

In some cases special taxes on all natives, who had not worked for a definite period for the imperialists, are introduced. Only recently in South Africa a law was introduced for taxing with £5 all natives in the Natal and Transvaal Provinces who have not worked for whites at least for a term of 3 months out of every 12.

In order to still more intensify the misery of the native population and to force them to go "voluntarily" to work for the exploiters, the old method of expropriation of their land is had recourse to. This method which played such an important part in creating a proletariat in Europe on the eve of capitalist development, is to-day being practiced in the colonial countries to even wider degrees and with greater severity, while special sections are allotted to the native population, so-called reservations. These reservations, besides the fact that there is not sufficient area to satisfy all the natives who had been driven there, are in most cases the least fertile, and the most inconvenient for agriculture or cattle breeding. The native population is in this way compelled either to die a slow death from starvation, or is forced to go back and live on their former land confiscated by their conquerors, i.e., actually give themselves up as their slaves. The expropriation of land is the first act undertaken by the civilisers, who have taken upon themselves the "burden" of raising the backward peoples on to the level of European culture.

Heavy taxes, and the deprivation of land, compels the natives to seek work on the side. Here he is met by the recruiting agents of the large capitalist employers, who sign up contracts with them for definite periods, generally not less than 9 months nor more than 3 years. The contract from a juridical point of view has the form of a labor agreement, or a free settlement between two parties. If, however, we take into consideration that the native is absolutely illiterate, and besides, does not understand the language in which the contract was written, that the native is helpless, that the recruiting districts are fixed by the Government and that in the given district the recruiting agents have the monopoly for contracting laborers, and that they receive every support from the chiefs of the tribes and the local authorities, then it is not difficult to understand that contract labor is merely a prettier form and, from a juridical point of view corresponds more with the capitalist system of forced labor. The forced nature of contract labor is intensified by the direct pressure brought to bear by the local functionaries and chiefs of tribes on the natives. This pressure is frequently sanctioned by the central authorities, in the way of circulars issued concerning the necessity of convincing the natives to close contracts. At the present time the system of contract labor is the most widespread form of forced labor. Any break of the contract by the worker is regarded as a criminal offence and is being punished by corporal punishment and penal servitude.

In many cases, under cover of contract labor, we can observe actual trade in slaves. Of such a character, for example, is the system of contract labor in the Portuguese colonies. The Portuguese Government, according to the Mozambique Treaty with South Africa for a certain sum



permits Mozambique natives to be contracted for work in the mines of the South African Union. The maximum term for which laborers are hired according to the contracts is 18 months, after which the laborer is supposed to be returned to Mozambique. In case of death, the sum of £30 is paid out for the contract laborer. This sum is supposed to be paid to the relatives of the dead workers and only in case the family is not to be found, it is handed into the State fund. Knowing the "fatherly" care taken by the Portuguese administration of the natives, one may rest assure that the family never does see this money and that the £30 are merely the price of the slave which the Portuguese slave-holders get from their South-African colleagues.

Another form of masked slavery is Peonage, or the compensation by means of labor any debts incurred. In practice this payment of debts is turned into actual slavery of hundreds of thousands of people in the Southern States of the United States, in the Latin-American countries, in the West Indies and Philippine Islands.

The system of peonage means that should a worker in case of need happen to borrow even a small sum of money, or for some reason or other find himself in debt to his rich exploiter, he is in this way turned into a real slave to his creditor. Furthermore, the debtor is compelled to sign a peonage agreement, according to which not only he, but also his family is made responsible for his debt. In practice, not only is this debt never paid up, but on the contrary, the more the debtor works for his boss, the bigger grows the debt, owing to different fines, new small grants, besides some additional sum added on by the boss, which the illiterate laborer is not able, nor does he dare under threat of death, to contradict. The laborer and his family are frequently transferred from hand to hand, i.e., in actual fact sold, for it is sufficient that the creditor be paid the amount which the debtor owes, when the obligation is transferred to the new owner and the laborer is forced to go wherever sent. Peonage is defended by the law, i.e., the Court obliges the runaway slave to return to his owner until his debt is completely paid up.

And, finally, another form of forced labor is the chain gang system. The exploiters, in their aspirations to legalise forced labor, found it rather convenient to have recourse to the sentence of imprisonment. The authorities generally invent a whole number of compulsory regulations, the violation of which lead to sentences of forced work for different terms. This form of getting cheap labor, is widespread in all colonial countries and also in the Southern States of the USA. As a rule, the Sheriff, when the exploiters are in need of cheap labor power for work on the farms, for repairing the roads or for other purposes arrest the necessary number of poor Negroes for vagabondage, i.e., merely because they are poor, for a vagabond is considered any one without employment, who has no means for a living. Those arrested are brought before the judge, who quickly, without any much ado, sentences them either directly to forced labor for a definite term or to money fines. The latter is generally replaced by forced labor. The form of sentencing to money fines is quite convenient for handing the prisoners over into the hands of private persons, for it is enough for anyone to pay up the fine for the prisoner, when the latter becomes the debtor of his "benefactor" and is forced to pay his debt with his labor, i.e., actually is turned into a peon.

The struggle against forced labor is closely linked up with the struggle against Imperialism and Capitalism. Steps taken by the Government in the different countries do not aim at abolishing forced labor, but at moderating it, for the purpose of stopping the catastrophical decrease in the population of the colonies, threatening to annihilate the slaves.

In the month of June, at the yearly Conference of the International Labor Office a convention will be drawn up for the international regulation of forced labor. The Socialist, Liberal and other lawyers of all shades and colors will sit on the Commissions and Sub-Commissions and at the different open sessions; they will eloquently discuss the differences between forced labor and obligatory labor and corv e; they will speak



about the mission of the civilised Europeans and the importance of obligatory labor and high taxes for teaching the savages the "charm" of systematic work. Particularly the Socialists will doubtlessly do their best to prove on the one hand that they are the only defenders of the oppressed, and, on the other, that they are trying even more than the capitalist themselves to preserve the capitalist system from any upheavals or storms.

This Geneva bosh with regard to regulating on an international scale forced labor has been continuing now for the last two years. Last year the Conference also discussed this question, and drew up a Questionnaire which was sent to all Governments.

Have any changes whatever been effected in the horrible conditions of the colored men in result of this talk, has their heavy lot been in any way relieved? Nothing of the kind. On the contrary, we note that the offensive against the natives in South Africa has been intensified; a draft law was submitted by the Hertzog Government to Parliament, which from a juridical point of view makes the native population even more dependent on the white farmers. We see to-day the continuation of the application of ruinous methods for the natives' health and lives, of building the railroad of the Brazzaville-Ocean in the French Congo. We note that the policy of selling Portuguese natives from Mozambique and Angola for the mines of South Africa, the plantations of St. Thomas Island and other places is continuing. The discourses of this year will yield no better results.

No matter what the decisions of the Geneva "protectors" of the colored masses, regardless of the fine clauses they may insert in their regulations, one thing is certain, forced labor, as formerly, will remain the most important means for guaranteeing the capitalists with cheap labor power. For the toiling masses in the colonies, slavery, even though regulated by the different international conventions, still remains what in actual fact it really is.

The imperialists will never renounce the use of forced labor, consequently, the only way to overcome the horrors of forced labor is the struggle for the overthrow of the imperialists. The capitalists cannot renounce the use of "cheap" labor power, which is to them one of the chief weapons for competition amongst themselves, and consequently, the only means for putting an end to all forced labor as a source of cheap labor power, is to wage an uncompromising struggle for the overthrow of the whole capitalist system.

For the purpose of waging a successful fight against Imperialism and Capitalism, the working masses of all countries, regardless of color, race or nationality, should consolidate their forces and rally to the banner of the Red International of Labor Unions---the only Proletarian International of the workers the world over.

Slavin.

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# DOWN WITH THE SOCIAL-FASCISTS AND REFORMISTS FROM THE SECOND AND AMSTERDAM INTERNATIONALS, LACKEYS OF CAPITALISM AND TRAITORS OF THE

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND THE COLONIES. WORKING CLASS.

At the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in 1924, at the end of the first Labour Government's term of office, a resolution was carried unanimously, the first two clauses of which demanded that steps should be taken -

(1) To stop the persecution of workers for political or industrial reasons, particularly in India, and Egypt, and to secure the release of all who are suffering imprisonment for their opposition to British Imperialism.

(2) To provide adequate protection for the subject races of the Empire in the struggle for freedom. (Report, p. 79).

In LABOUR AND THE NATION, the statement of the Labour Party's programme and policy, which was published some months before the General Election of 1929, the declaration on Colonial policy omitted all reference to the struggle against imperialism, but stated that a Labour Government would make no compromise with policies which aim at accelerating the economic development of backward areas by methods which undermine the independence, the social institutions and the morals of the inhabitants and would use every means in its power to protect them in the occupation and enjoyment of their land (p.44).

The Labour Party's Election Manifesto of 1929 contained no reference at all to Colonial policy.

What is the record of the Labour Government on Colonial questions in the twelve months since the election?

Apart from India, where those who are taking part in the struggle for independence are being shot down or arrested in hundreds, and the Meerut prisoners have now been over a year in goal for exactly that "Opposition to British imperialism" which the Labour Party in 1924 professed to support; apart from the campaign of repression carried out through the agency of the New Zealand Government in Samoa; what has happened in Africa and the Near East, and particularly in those territories which are under the immediate control of the British Colonial Office?

## WEST AFRICA.

In the Gambia armed police were used against workers in the strike led by the Bathurst Trade Union in November, the story of which has been told in the "Circular." The action of the Governor, who was officially neutral, but actually supported the employers against the strikers was not questioned by the Colonial Office.

In Nigeria last December 48 natives, who were taking part in demonstrations against increased taxation, were killed. Of these six were women, who were shot by armed police on December 14, and 29 were women who were shot by British troops on December 16. (Hansard, December 18 and 23). Very heavy fines were imposed as collective punishment on natives in the districts where these demonstrations took place; the people of a single village were required to pay £2,000. (Hansard, January 29).



## EAST AFRICA.

In Kenya the Native Lands Trust Bill, which was drafted under the Conservative Government in 1927 and provides for the control of land reserved for natives by boards of trustees composed of officials and settlers (Africans themselves having no control), was strongly opposed by native organisations. Of these the most important is the Kikuyu Central Association. The Colonial Office assured them that the Government could not protect their claims to the land until the Bill was passed, but as a concession to them proposed to reduce European leases of land in the reserves to 33 years. This the white settlers would not accept. Lord Passfield (according to the "Herald" of January 16) gave way to the hostility of the settlers, and the Bill was again held up.

Meanwhile the Kikuyu Central Association, which has been leading the agitation on the land question among Kenya Africans, is threatened with suppression. The Governor, Sir Edward Grier, announced to a meeting of Africans in the Kikuyu reserve that the Government was taking steps against those who were refusing allegiance to the chiefs and elders (paid servants of the Government) and giving it instead to such associations as the Kikuyu Central and that the collection of money by natives without permission was to be stopped. The people of the Akamba country, whom the Kikuyu Central Association have tried to bring into the organisation, were told by the British Senior Commissioner to "chase these emissaries out as they would hyenas when they raid their flocks by night" ("Times", February 27 and 28). In Kenya the moment of armed repression has not yet been reached, but it is quite clear that preparations are being made to put down any attempt at organised resistance against "methods which undermine the independence and social institutions" of Kenya Africans.

In Uganda last July five Africans were killed and thirty wounded in a raid on a chapel by British officials. The magistrate, according to a Colonial Office statement in the House of Commons seven months after the event, found that this was a case of "justifiable homicide." ("Hansard" February 19, and "Manchester Guardian," February 28.)

## SOUTH AFRICA.

Although the Dominion Government of South Africa directly controls the "subject races" within its territory, the Imperial Government, through the Secretary for the Dominions, is responsible for upholding or disapproving its policy. Since the Labour Government took office in Britain, the South African Government has carried through a policy of increasing repression. The Native Bills and the amendment to the Riotous Assemblies Act, which the European parties are now cooperating to put through, make up a series of coercion laws against African natives. During this same period a series of acts of violence have been carried out, including:

(1) A raid by armed police, with tear-gas bombs, on Africans in Durban who were said to have resisted payment of poll-tax.

("Circular", January, p.20.)

(2) An attack by bombing aeroplanes with tear-gas bombs, gas pistols and fire-arms on natives in the Northern Transvaal who refused to accept as chief a man appointed by the Governor-General. ("Express", January 21, and "Times", January 25.)

(3) The breaking up by police with batons of a demonstration at Cape Town, in which 1,500 Africans took part, against the Government's Native Bills. ("Times", March 6.)

(4) An attack by armed police on the African quarter at Worcester, a town 60 miles from Cape Town, in a district where the Cape section of the African Nationalist Congress was organising a strike against the conditions of agricultural workers. The pretext for the police raid was the search for drink. The Africans drove off the police, who returned with reinforcements of armed Europeans, and a number of



natives were killed and injured. ("Times", May 5, 1930).

#### THE NEAR EAST.

In Palestine during the rising last August British troops were used to suppress the struggle of Arabs and Jews against British imperialism and its Zionist agents. The numbers killed by the troops have never been published. Recent official statements have repeatedly emphasised the fact that the Labour Government has no intention of protecting the people of Palestine in their struggle for freedom (as laid down in the 1924 resolution) or the Arabs in the occupation and enjoyment of their land. At the Labour Party Conference in 1929 Henderson said:-

"His Majesty's Government have no intention of reconsidering the British terms of the Mandate for Palestine. There is no question of altering the position of this country in regard to the Mandate or the policy laid down in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and embodied in the Mandate, of supporting the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jews." (Report, p.206.)

In October the British High Commissioner in Palestine issued a Seditious Offences Ordinance, making "anti-imperialist" propaganda a crime punishable by imprisonment for life.

In the Sudan troops of the Sudan Defence Force were used in December for "punitive operations" against a native chief and his supporters. The Chief was arrested, and, according to a "Times" report, "the necessary measures for maintaining order" were taken. (December 21.)

The facts given above show that the policy of colonial repression, which was enforced in the Sudan and in India (for example, through the Bengal Ordinances) by the Labour Government of 1924, has been carried very much further by the present Government; that in all parts of the Empire the agents of imperialism, under the control of Labour Ministers, have used armed forces to oppose the colonial peoples in their struggle for freedom and are continuing the process of depriving them of the occupation and enjoyment of their land.

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# *The Negro Proletariat of Latin America and the International Conference of Negro Workers.*

The racial problem exists in all Latin-American countries. The bourgeoisie deny the existence of any such problem or simply try to get around it, but it is looming larger and larger as time passes. No matter how they may try to belie the fact, the racial problem does exist in Latin America. The time has come to show to the ideologues of the bourgeoisie that the workers have achieved consciousness of themselves as a class and are not going to draw back from the problems they are called upon to solve but will approach them from the class standpoint and endeavor to solve them in accordance with the principles that will bring about their freedom from the yoke of capitalism. From the very outset the task appears complex because the bourgeoisie, especially in our countries, have always tried to create that frame of mind in the workers that best suits bourgeois interests. Even those of the toilers who are subjected both to class and racial exploitation are to be found clinging tightly to the bourgeoisie and flinch from solving the problems by which they are confronted. But we are bound by no ties to the bourgeois class. As revolutionaries we do not carry this deadweight of prejudice created by the ruling class the better to exploit us as a class and to preserve their overlordship for all time. We will strain every nerve in working to get all American-Negro workers to recognize the double exploitation to which they are subjected both as representatives of a given class and of a given race. We will put forth every effort too, to get them to line themselves up with the movement for liberation which is developing in all countries where the criminal actions of the imperialists and the treacherous tub-thumping of the national bourgeoisie transform the Negro worker into the lowest of the low because he does not yet understand that it is his duty not to repudiate the class struggle, but by waging that struggle also to attain to racial equality.

All are aware of how fictitious the democracy of the Latin-American countries actually is. Everybody is aware, further, of the fact that our working class lacks the most elementary rights. This absence of elementary rights, makes thousands and tens of thousands of men and women of all races to throw themselves into the struggle against the common enemy. Yet the humiliation, contempt and vilification to which the Negroes are exposed is becoming a daily feature of life in these countries---so much so that it no longer awakens resentment. By putting up with such a state of things the Negro proletariat will in the long run sink lower and lower until he will become a mere beast of burden serving as an object of exploitation and will be made to live in such conditions as obtain for the majority of the US Negro population, conditions fittet more for dogs than for human beings.

If we make a careful examination of the position of the black population throughout Latin-America, we will come to the conclusion that the position of the Negroes has not changed one iota since the days when these countries threw off the Spanish yoke in order to pass into the hands of either the United States or Great Britain, and are becoming more similar to the conditions which existed in the days of slavery. Today, you find the employer of labour looking down on the wage workers in the same contemptuous attitude and with same loathing with which the "masters" of the old days regarded their slaves. The only right in the field of politics that the national bourgeoisie allowed the Negroes is that of the voting cattle at the polling booths. As for the imperialists who jointly



with the national bourgeoisie exploit the working class of our countries, they recognise the Negro's right only to work and starve.

Now, what are we Negro workers doing in face of this hellish problem? The majority of us accept the bonds of slavery and exploitation at the hands of the imperialists; others are promoting the interests of the national bourgeoisie... Yet every one of us who does not understand the class view point that demands struggle against the national bourgeoisie and the imperialists, further the future exploitation of the working class. Meanwhile, the Negro peoples in our countries continue to sink lower and lower in status as the result of the activities of those who pretend to be their defenders and who betray them for the privilege of gathering the crumbs that fall from the table of the national bourgeoisie and the robber-imperialists.

These were the conditions of the Negro workers of Latin America, when the Second Congress of the League Against Imperialism, (Frankfort, July, 1929) decided to call the First International Conference of Negro Workers in London. What were the aims and objects of this conference? Let us try here to give an answer.

The world has long been witnessing the most unbridled exploitation of the colonial countries by the imperialist powers, especially countries with a Negro population. The sharp crisis the imperialist countries are passing through is being made to bear with much of its weight on the shoulders of the working class and peasantry of the colonies. The United States has enslaved in economic chains all the countries of Central America, the Antilles, and the Caribbean Sea. The Yankees have got a regular slave trade going which takes the Negroes of Haiti, Jamaica and other countries away from hearth and home to bring them to Central America where they are made to sustain most brutal exploitation by the national bourgeoisie and the US imperialists. The plantations of Cane-sugar, coffee, bananas and other tropical produce are cultivated almost entirely by Negroes brought from the Islands of Haiti and Jamaica. At the instance of imperialist concerns the different governments of the Central-American Republics regulate the importation of black workers, which policy brings down the price of labour. Wages go down as low as ten cents a day, the working day is never less than 12 hours. When the strength of the slaves begins to flag, the whip of the overseer is used to instil new "guts" into them. These Negro workers are made to live in the filthiest of huts while armed guards in the pay of the imperialist plantation companies and the troops of the particular bourgeois state concerned are always ready to apply the "law of flight" (which means murder for supposed attempts to escape), in all those cases when the workers make any demand for improved working conditions or rise in revolt against the hunger wages they are paid and the bestial treatment meted out to them.

On the Guadeloupe Islands of the Lesser Antilles, a French possession, a wide-sweeping strike movement broke out which was directed against the appalling conditions of labour imposed by the exploiters on the sugar plantation and sugar factory workers. The movement was of such intensity that there were hopes of speedily freeing the Negro workers from the yoke of French imperialism. The entire movement, however, was crushed and drow<sup>ed</sup> in blood with the aid of the colonial troops maintained by France, the land which is glorified by many among us as the "cradle of democracy and constitutional liberties". And we get a Negro servant of French imperialism like Candus who rose in the French Chamber of Deputies to demand the smashing of this heroic movement for liberation into which the Negro Proletariat had thrown itself. This is the line always taken by all those who fly the flag of defenders of the Negro race in order to get soft jobs for themselves created in the interests of the exploiting class. These traitors serve the interests of their masters by soiling out those who have had the simplicity to vote for them at election time in the conviction that it is possible to win a free and human existence within



the framework of the capitalist order.

To-day, the black republic of Haiti---sick to death of US imperialist rule as exercised through that hired bandit Borno---is fighting the system of heavy taxation and galling laws, laws which deprive the population of the country of the most elementary civil rights. If the liberation movement in Haiti does not move out on to the road of open revolutionary class struggle, no matter who comes to power it will be one who will serve the interests of imperialism and find the means once more to hoodwink and betray the workers and peasants of the country. But if the Haiti movement will come out determinedly against Yankee imperialism and the national bourgeoisie, the masses, who have already given such striking proofs of their ability to fight, will drive forward their final emancipation. Throughout the Antilles and the West Indies generally the Movement against US imperialism is spreading and strengthening. This is due, of course, to the intensive exploitation of the natives and their determination to fight to the end against the Wall Street. plutocrats.

Our Conference will have to solve the very important problem of coordinating and organising the movement for liberation of the Negro proletariat of the colonial lands so as to assist the international working class in its fight to overthrow the capitalist system. The revolutionary proletariat is supporting our Conference because it knows that its delegates are going to discuss all problems of vital interest to its class comrades of the Negro proletariat, these problems that affect the latter both as Negroes and as workers. The Conference will be the gathering point for the accumulation of a wealth of experience that can be used in the struggle against capitalist oppression.

One of the fundamental problems confronting the Conference is that of the war the imperialist powers are making such feverish preparations for, a war that will be launched against the Soviet Union, the fatherland of the toilers and down-trodden the world over. It is common knowledge to all that the imperialists made use of black troops during the last war and now we find them already preparing the formation of huge Negro bataillions to furnish the cannon fodder to be used in attacking the country of the workers and peasants, the only country that has been able to overthrow capitalism, a country which despite all the obstacles created by the capitalist powers has held intact, for 13 years already, within the bonds of unity a hundreds and eighty million workers and peasants, country pushing ahead with the work of building socialism.

Suffering as it does under the restrictions we have described above, deprived by racial hatred of any chance of even earning enough for the elementary necessities compelled, too, to perform the dirtiest and heaviest labour, the Negro proletarians of Latin America ought to line up with their brothers in the United States in Africa, in the colonies exploited by imperialism, and with the class movement of the world for the common struggle of liberation and against the capitalist system.

The Conference of Negro Workers of the whole world that is to open on July 1, will be the most outstanding event in the history of the Negro movement and its struggle to destroy slavery. The Conference will mark the beginning of a ruthless struggle to win recognition for the Negro's claim to human rights, the beginning of a struggle which will have to be linked up with the struggle to win freedom and well-being for all the toilers.

By organising together and linking up with their white fellow-workers in all countries, the Negro toilers will be able to do away forever with the treachery of false "apostles" of the Garvey type, they will be able to wage successfully the battle against imperialist exploitation and to struggle against the preparations for war upon the USSR.

The International Conference will broach the most important problem the Negro workers have ever had to tackle. It is therefore the bounden duty of both the Negro and white workers to give all the help to the conference and to insure that it will be a bumper success.



In the hands of the proletariat the creation of an international Negro Workers' organisation will be a new weapon in the struggle against the Capitalist order.

Time and again the Negro proletariat of Latin America has proved its class-consciousness although the great problems confronting the Negro workers throughout the world had long been outside its ken, and it is for the Negroes of the Latin-speaking countries of the New World to prove now once more that they realise where their duty lies, that they must join up in the struggle their fellow-toilers are waging both in the colonies of Africa and in the West Indies nearer home.

The participation of the Negro proletariat of Latin America in our International Conference will be no less valuable than the representation of the Negroes of the other countries that will appear at the Conference. And when there later takes final shape that organisation to be created at the Conference, when the Negro working class of the world is organised and is fighting for its rights both as a class and race, the capitalist world will be afforded the opportunity to convince itself of the fact that unity of action between the white, and black toilers who are equally exploited and ground down by the ruling class will be sufficient to bring the capitalist order to an end and to usher in the rule of the workers and peasants which alone is capable of guaranteeing them their class rights and to ensure racial and national independence and equality.

Saturnino Hernandez.

#### REALIGNMENT OF FORCES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

##### Split in National Congress.

The economic crisis and the raising of the national and class consciousness of the oppressed native masses of South Africa resulted in the intensification of the class struggle and the National Revolutionary Movement against Imperialism and Capitalism. That the struggle is more intense today than ever in the past is clear from the many strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and armed resistance to the police organised of late by the native proletariat. This intensification of the struggle has led to a process of differentiation inside the national movement of the natives. It widened the gulf between the Left and the Right Wings, the upshot being the split of the African National Congress during its recent sessions in Bloemfontein (Orange Free State Province) held between April 21 and 25.

Established in 1912, the African National Congress is the biggest native organisation in South Africa, embracing besides the toilers also the chiefs of the tribes. Led as it was chiefly by the native intelligentsia and the chiefs, the Congress showed no signs of militancy, and although officially affiliated to the League Against Imperialism, its activities were confined to making petitions to Parliament, and supplications to "His Majesty the King" with an occasional protest against the anti-native Bills introduced by the different Governments who happened to be in power. Only the organisation in the Cape Province has shown more militancy. In spite of the moderate views of the Chairman, Professor Thaele (who advocated Gandhi's method of passive resistance), the Cape branch has of late been organising and leading the countless militant movements and demonstrations of the natives and colored which has already led to many bloody collisions with the police in the South-Western part of the Cape (Worcester, Ransenville).

The radicalisation of the masses and the growing influence of the Communist Party on the rank and file of the Congress alarmed the chiefs and the moderate elements of the intelligentsia and led them to mobilise all their forces to prevent the leadership of the Congress passing into



the hands of the Left Wing. The reactionary clique managed by various underhand methods to get the majority at the session which they promptly utilised by refusing to recognise the mandates of many Left-wing delegates (who were disqualified to take part in the voting) and to elect only anti-revolutionary elements to the Congress - Executive.

Though hamstrung by these measures, the Lefts put up a good fight, and although the majority of their resolutions were rejected they were instrumental in unmasking the treacherous character of the Rights. The fight between the Lefts and the Rights begun with the report by Gumedé, Chairman of the Congress who belongs to the Left Wing. Analysing the present situation Gumedé urged that a more militant programme of action be adopted and that all campaigns' petition campaigning be condemned. He appealed to the Congress to struggle more determinedly for complete social economic and political equality of the natives with the whites, for self-determination and for the organisation of a native Worker Peasant Republic. He also pointed to the Soviet Union saying that it was the only friend that the oppressed peoples could look to and that it was up to the African National Congress to defend the USSR with every means in its power.

The Rights were thoroughly dissatisfied with Gumedé's speech, and not only deprived him of the Chairmanship, but did not even elect him to the new Executive Committee. Dr. Seme was elected Chairman of the Congress, all the Right elements joining forces to guarantee his election (two candidates besides Gumedé were at first nominated, but later one was withdrawn). But even in face of these manœuvres, the Lefts got Gumedé's candidature supported by 25% of the delegates allowed to cast a vote.

Having turned down all the militant resolutions of the Left Wing, the Congress decided to take no part in the International Negro Workers' Conference and to announce that May '51 (the official date of the establishment of the South African Union) as a "day of humiliation, prayer and protest against the domination and economic strangulation of the Bantu Race which has been the policy of the Europeans since the establishment of the South African Union in 1910". The Congress also adopted a resolution protesting against the anti-native laws and demanded the convocation by the Herzog government of a Conference jointly with native representatives.

Seme, the newly-elected Congress Chairman announced that he would introduce strong measures against the Communists, having in view, of course, all the left elements.

When the Leadership of the Congress had passed completely into the hands of the Right Wing, a split took place.

Many organisations representing hundreds of thousands of members refused to recognise the new Executive Committee. The Cape Branch is the spearhead of the movement, its delegates published an open letter to Gumedé outlining the situation that had developed after the Congress and urging the convocation of a new Emergency Session of the Congress on the grounds that the violation of the constitution made it impossible for the present Executive Committee to speak in the name of the Congress. The Lefts also decided to convene a Conference to elect delegates for the International Negro Workers' Conference.

The defeat of the Lefts at the recent Congress Session was due in large measure to the wrong tactics used by the revolutionary elements. Both the Communist Party and the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions, which are very influential among the natives, did nothing whatever to mobilise the masses against the Right leadership. Wrongly believing that the united front meant an alliance with the leaders, the revolutionary elements for the sake of unity refrained from criticising the Rights and took no steps to expose the treachery of these fake leaders to the masses. Of course, this tactic only served to create the impression among the toiling masses that the action of the leaders was correct, they were consequently, not prepared to fight them.



The revolutionary elements must profit by their mistakes and not repeat them in their relations with the Left Leaders. We should always remember that many of these left leaders are only using left phrases to betray the masses which are becoming radicalised more and more, and that in their heart of hearts they have no sympathy with the revolutionary movement. We can be quite sure of it that in the Left Wing camp there are still many representatives of the anti-revolutionary wing who will do their utmost to disintegrate the Left Wing movement from within. With the intensification of the revolutionary struggle we can look forward to seeing many of the present Left-Wingers siding up with the Reaction. Regardless of personalities, the revolutionary elements from the very outset must fearlessly criticise and ruthlessly expose any signs of opportunism, of compromise, and must make it their duty to urge the masses to keep a close watch over the actions of their leaders. All efforts must now be directed to ~~the~~ consolidate<sup>and</sup> organisationally strengthen the Communist Party and the Revolutionary Unions as the only consistent revolutionary organisations of the working class. Only by building up a mass Communist Party and a big revolutionary TU movement will the workers' victory over imperialism and capitalism be assured.

### Trade Union Congress.

The process of differentiation is to be seen not only among the natives, but also among the white workers who occupy a privileged position in South Africa. The whites are, for the most part, skilled workers, usually receiving four and five times the wages of the natives. In 1927, for example, 80,755 white workers and employees engaged in the manufacturing industries of the country received £17, 852,478, whereas 121,934 non-European workers received only £6,281,230. But the position of the white workers has been getting steadily worse and worse. In spite of the "colour bar" and other disabilities, the non-European workers are making inroads in the former preserves of the white workers. The whites are finding it increasingly more difficult to keep the non-European workers out of the skilled trades. On the other hand, the big influx of "poor whites", all unskilled workers, from the villages and especially the world - economic crisis which has hit very hard South Africa, have led to widespread unemployment among the white workers, whose worsening position has given rise to general dissatisfaction and the strengthening of the Left tendencies.

The Leftward drift among the white workers found due reflection at the Sixth Annual Session of the Trade Union Congress of South Africa held in Johannesburg on April 18 and 19.

Although it claims to be the National TU Centre, the Trade Union Congress embraces only the white workers' organisations, and then not all of them. It has a competitor in the Cape Federation of Trade Union, while there are many white organisations which are not affiliated to either of the two central organisations.

As a matter of fact, the Trade Union Congress is not a closely centralised organisation capable of leading the working-class struggle. In his opening speech, Moore, the Chairman, said that affiliation to the Congress implied only free collaboration and coordination of action, the federation of various units in a free association bound by no ties except the mutual obligations of one organisation to another, and to the movement as a whole. This looseness of the organisation is responsible for the limited activities of the Sessions of the Congress, for only on very rare occasions are any matters other than local questions discussed. As regards its relations with the world outside, the Congress has preserved its "splendid isolation", not being affiliated to any of the Trade Union Internationals.

But a new note was struck at the session this year. A letter received from the Amsterdam International was the occasion of a discussion on international orientation. And it is certainly characteristic, that although



the letter was received from Amsterdam, not a single speaker supported affiliation to this Yellow International. The controversy centered on the question of whether or not to affiliate to the Red International of Labour Unions. Tyler, the delegate of the Building Workers' Union, who urged affiliation to the RILU, said that this was the only real International, as it supported the Soviet form of government which alone assured the workers of the fate of their children. The arguments of the opposite view boiled down to the fear that affiliation to the RILU would bring about a split inside the Congress and that the workers had no sympathy with communism. One of the Rights, Kendall, a delegate from the Woodworkers' Union declared that although he was a Socialist he was against Communism as he disbelieved in revolution or in the taking of human life. After a long and animated discussion, the situation was "saved", by one of the representatives of the Right Wing who suggested that the question be withdrawn as the Congress hadn't the rules of either of the Internationals at hand, and consequently would be unable to make a correct choice anyhow. This motion was adopted by a majority of 16 against 6. It is certainly significant that when official posts in the Congress came up for election, Kendall was defeated whereas Tyler was elected Senior Vice-Chairman.

The discussion of this extremely important question and especially the evasion of a straight answer shows that there is a pretty strong Left-Wing movement developing among the white workers, which, despite the decaying influence of the "colour bar", is beginning to take its orientation from the revolutionary TU movement. Doubtless, as the crisis develops and unemployment grows, the Left tendencies among the white workers will develop too.

The revolutionary elements both inside and outside the white TU movement are faced with the very serious task of guiding the Left-Wing movement of the white workers in the right channels. We must push forward our propaganda and agitation among these workers for international solidarity, we must show that the interests of the whole working class, irrespective of race or colour, are one and the same. We must prove with the help of concrete facts taken from the history of the working class of South Africa and the other countries, that the "colour bar" is advantageous only to the exploiting class and is damaging the interests of all the workers. The revolutionary elements must lose no opportunity to fight white chauvinism and to build up the united front of all the workers on the basis of implacable class struggle.

The Congress resolved to convene a General Trade Union Conference jointly with the Cape Federation of Trade Unions within the next six months in order to draft a National Programme of Action. While the preparations are being made and at the future Conference itself, the Lefts should push forward their propaganda and put up a serious fight for the organisation of a Trade Union Federation of South Africa, which should include all the workers of South Africa regardless of race and colour, adopt a programme based on the recognition of the class struggle, and set up organic contact with the RILU. Only by uniting all the white, coloured and native workers in such a Federation, only by linking up their forces with the International Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, can the Labour Movement of South Africa not only successfully resist the capitalist onslaught but start a decisive counter offensive which will result in the victory of the working class.

J. Reed.

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# CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS IN JAMAICA\*

Jamaica, just like the whole capitalist world, is undergoing at the present time an acute economic crisis. The main wealth of Jamaica is in its banana plantations, sugar cane, coffee and other tropical products; and in view of the fact that the prices of these products greatly dropped, the results are clear to all. The extent of the crisis can be judged from the bourgeois paper issued in Jamaica, "The Daily Gleaner", which wrote in its leader of April 28th:

"The general opinion of the business community is that difficult times are ahead of us. Accounts are hard to collect; the smaller traders seem, as a class, to be short of ready money... The future of sugar appears, for the present, problematical... The prices paid to growers of bananas are far from magnificent; this seems to be a year of high production and poor returns. And there is a similar story to be told of many of our so-called 'minor products'.... Indeed, we have heard the view expressed that a slight blow\*\* would not be an unmitigated evil since, by restricting the supply of fruit, it might tend to improve prices."\*\*\*

Just like in all other capitalist countries, the difficulties of it are completely loaded on the backs of the toilers, and the conditions of the workers and poor peasants of Jamaica, which formerly had never been brilliant, have to-day become absolutely intolerable, for in addition to their old hardships unemployment has now set in.

In order to have their conditions improved, the workers who are under the influence of the reformist Marcus Garvey\*\*\*\* thought that the best thing to do would be to send a deputation to the Governor of Jamaica headed by Garvey. The conversation between the Governor and the Deputation is quite instructive and we consider it would not be superfluous to give here a detailed description of it.

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\* Jamaica is one of the West Indies group of Islands, belonging to Great Britain; it has an area of 10,904 sq. miles. Seventy-five percent of its million population is comprised of Negroes, while there are even less than 2% whites. The Negroes who were brought to Jamaica from Africa to work on the plantations as slaves, remain up till now, even after their formal liberation slave-bound to their American and British fruit companies, which possess the biggest plantations and which are in actual fact the real bossess of Jamaica.

\*\* Jamaica suffered greatly from the hurricane in 1907.

\*\*\* This hope for a hurricane helping out in the situation did not meet with the approval of the author of the article, who writes, that although hurricanes causing much harm are very rare, yet, in view of the fact that we cannot be sure about the extent to which the hurricane will do damage, it is better if we will not have it at all. Both the hope for a hurricane as well as the arguments against it are rather characteristic for the state of mind of the bourgeoisie.

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Marcus Garvey is a famous Negro National-Reformist. He is the organiser and leader of the international organisation of Negro workers, the so-called "World Association for Bettering the Conditions of the Negroes". This petty-bourgeois organisation at its Congress in August 1929, drew up a utopian programme for ridding the Negro race of the whites by establishing their own Negro capitalist enterprises. Recently Garvey once again appealed to the Negro bourgeoisie calling upon it to sign up to a loan essential to realise the programme, of the Association. Garvey exercises much influence among the Negro toiling masses, whom he attracts by means of his utopian plans.



The principal role in the deputation was played, naturally, by Garvey himself, who in a long speech described the living conditions of the workers, endeavouring to soften the Governor's heart with his description of the workers' miserable conditions. Garvey said that the workers' wages in Jamaica are on the average from 1 shilling 3 pence to 1 shilling 6 pence (31 cents to 38 cents) per day, with 12-16 hours' work. In Kingston, (the chief city of Jamaica), the average wage per day amounts to 3 shillings 6 pence (85 cents). In view of the fact that prices on food products are rather high, the toiling population generally lives on salted fish, eating it for breakfast, dinner and supper. Milk is too much of a luxury for the worker. Rent is quite high, and the workers are compelled to put up in small huts. The workers of the plantations live in small huts with earth floors and thatch roofs. Conditions of the plantation workers are such that their daughters go to the towns, where the majority become prostitutes. The workers are subject to heavy fines. For coming late to work by 5 minutes a whole shilling is deducted from their wages, and if a worker attempts to protest he is immediately arrested for having disturbed public order.

Garvey pointed out that the exhaustive work and poor nourishment undermines the health of the workers, who very rarely reach old age, and in most cases die when 40-45 years old. On the average the workers live to about 35-40 years. Garvey, on behalf of the workers put forth rather miserable demands: to raise the highest wage-rates from 3 shillings 6 pence to 4 shillings and the introduction of the 8-hour working day. He also brought up the plan of introducing in Jamaica the system of State capitalism, proposing that the Government take upon itself the organisation of a whole number of industries.

After Garvey, also other members of the Deputation spoke, while the Governor warned them that they should not be too long for his time was very limited and he had to leave.

After the Deputation had spoken, the Governor, first of all declared that he simply did not believe them. True, there is some unemployment; but is it possible there should not be any, once the country is undergoing economic depression? However, there is no necessity for the Government to interfere with regard to help to the unemployed, for the philanthropic societies are doing their bid and rendering help to the poor. The Governor is categorically against all plans for establishing State capitalism, in view of the fact that no good results were obtained anywhere, and the endeavour made in Australia, for instance, merely led to big losses. As regards the question of raising wages to 4 shillings and the introduction of the 8-hour working day, there can be no talk about it, for this would mean reduced output and bigger costs, and Jamaica is not rich enough to permit itself such luxuries.

In conclusion the Governor said: "I am not convinced that the position of labour at present is such as to necessitate any immediate action by the Government, nor do I at present see my way to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. This is not a suitable time for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, because the circumstances which were bad now might easily become worse by the end of the year. And while the position of the sugar industry hangs in the balance as it does now, I think it is no use our endeavouring to arrive at any opinions on facts which may change either for the worse or better very materially by the end of a year or 18 months".

The workers of Jamaica in this way got their first lesson in politics. In the future they will know that a capitalist agent only judges on the bad or good state of the country not by the standards of living of the workers but by the profits of the bourgeoisie. The principal thing is to see that the dividends are good, while to the fact that the workers, exhausted by their horrible labor conditions and their semi-starvation existence, die before their time, not much attention should be paid, for so far the capitalists are not threatened with a shortage in labor power. On the contrary, higher death-rates will only rid the



philanthropic societies of extra expenditure.

This lesson is not the last. The workers of Jamaica, influenced by their pseudo-leader Garvey, have decided to send a petition to the British King. So far Garvey succeeded in preserving the illusion among the workers of the possibility by means of constitutional methods to improve their conditions; these illusions, however, will soon dissipate. The toiling masses of Jamaica will convince themselves, just like the toilers of South Africa, Gambia, Nigeria, India and other colonies and possessions of "His Majesty" have already become convinced, that the King and his Ministers, Parliaments and Governors are merely executing the will of the capitalist class.

The workers of Jamaica will get the same reply from the King as they got from the Governor, and should they happen to be too obstinate in their demands, they will soon enough convince themselves that the Royal Army Service Corps in Jamaica know how to shoot down the workers not worse than their colleagues in other parts of the British Empire. The workers of Jamaica have only one road to follow for improving their conditions--- that is the road of the class struggle. Only by freeing themselves from the influence of their reformist pseudo-leaders, only by organising militant trade unions, will the workers of Jamaica be able to force the exploiters to grant their demands. The experiences gained in the struggles of the working class of all countries and all nations prove that such men like Garvey bring much harm to the working class, and the sooner the workers will turn aside from them, the quicker will they be able to obtain improvements in their present conditions.

We are certain that the "Lesson in Politics" given by the Governor of Jamaica will give good results and that the workers of Jamaica will in the very near future line up with the ranks of the militant fighters for a New Society.

A. GOLD.

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#### CONDITIONS OF NEGROES IN THE FRENCH AND BELGIAN COLONIES OF CENTRAL AFRICA.

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The history of the colonisation of Central Africa is one record of murder and rapine, the extermination of entire tribes whose villages and lands are now laid waste. The Belgians and the French were no better and no worse than the other colonisers in this respect. We have no intention of writing here the history of the colonisation of this vast area; but we should remember that barely 30 years ago the population of the Belgian Congo was estimated variously at 20, 30 and even 40 millions---the 1912 census discovered that only 8½ millions were left. Similarly in 1900, the population of French Equatorial Africa was estimated at 8 to 10 millions. The 1921 census showed only 2.9 millions! That the population has decreased by half is admitted even in official quarters.

In the early 1905 the last instructions of the heads of the different companies to their agents were: "Don't forget that the Maxim machine-gun is a serious factor in the extraction of rubber." But these areas were depopulated not only by machine guns but by the inhuman exploitation of the colonial companies who compelled the natives to supply rubber and procure ivory, and by the diseases (cholera, typhus and venereal diseases) brought in by the whites and "sleeping sickness", which ravaged the country as large numbers of Negroes were transferred from district to district.

"Many tribes have died out completely; others have migrated to other localities, and areas that once supported flourishing populations are now wastes"---writes a German traveller who recently returned from the Belgian Congo.



**BELGIAN CONGO.** The colonisation of the Belgian Congo like the colonisation of the French possessions began in the early '90s, the aim being to tap these areas of rubber, ivory and copra. The fall of rubber prices (which decreased from 34,80 francs in 1910 to 4.75 fr. in 1914) and the decreasing ivory returns compelled the colonisers to cultivate different commercial plants like coffee, cocoa and cotton. The exportation of palm nuts and palm oil is now a big factor, whereas rubber exports have contracted considerably.

Copper (and not agricultural product) has taken the place formerly occupied by rubber. The rich copper deposits discovered in the Katanga District in 1909 determined the further development of Belgian Congo. In 1911, 997 tons of copper were exported, in 1926, 90,000 tons, increasing to 130,000 tons in 1929. The number of whites in this country has increased from 700 to 7,000; 50% of the Europeans in the Congo living at the present time in Katanga.

The "Union Minière du Haut Katango" who owns these deposits is controlled by the Belgian "Société Générale", 50% of the shares being controlled by foreign capital. About 30,000 Negroes are employed in the copper mines. This company pays out a dividend averaging 30%, while the nominal value of the shares has been increased 20 times over.

Besides copper, the Belgian Congo is fairly rich in gold deposits (4,000 Kgr. being exported in 1927). There are also big diamond diggings which occupy the second place in the world for output.

**WESTERN AFRICA.** The area of French Western Africa is four million square kilometres. About 80% of the export trade of West Africa is made up of oil-yielding plants and vegetable oil: ground nut and palm oil, etc. Another commercial plant that finds a big export trade is cocoa cultivated chiefly in the plantations of the Ivory Coast. The cultivation of cotton is also making big strides in West Africa today. Another big item in the export-trade of West Africa is made up of costly and common kinds of lumber, while, of late, large quantities of bananas are being grown specially for export.

**EQUATORIAL AFRICA.** The area of Equatorial Africa is 2,8 million square kilometres, or more than four times larger than the territory of France. The economic life of Equatorial Africa depends mainly on the production of rubber, the plantations being owned chiefly by the French "Compagnie Forestière Sanga Oubanghi". There is also a big export trade in lumber.

However, it must be said that despite the stupendous natural resources of this country (for there are known big mineral deposits, in particular copper-ore, with a 50% content of metal), Equatorial Africa has hardly been developed so far.

**TOGOLAND AND THE CAMEROONS** which were annexed by the French after the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty, have a good system of railroads that were constructed before the war by the Germans. This is playing a big role in the economic development of these colonies. Palm oil, cocoa-beans, cotton, rubber, coffee and other commercial plants are the chief products exported.

**CONDITIONS OF NEGROES.** Information on the condition of the Negroes in these colonies is of a casual nature. No information on this question is to be had from official quarters, and consequently the only source of information are the writings of travellers. During the last few years two books have been published on the Negroes and their lives in the French colonies, which give us a very good idea of what the conditions are. One of these books, written by Londres<sup>o</sup>, the well-known french journalist, created a big stir even in the bourgeois press. The second book was written by a prominent French writer---André Gide.<sup>oo</sup>

<sup>o</sup>) The land of the Black.

<sup>oo</sup>) A voyage to the Congo.



There is another book on the Belgian Congo, by Walters, published in 1924. But the book of this socialist, a former "Minister of Labour" as we learn from the cover, is far too official and less interesting than the works of the foregoing authors. Apparently the conditions of the Negroes in the Belgian Congo is essentially the same as in the French Congo. According to Ortis, the Chairman of the Belgian Red Cross, the death-rate among the natives in 1927 was 128 and 144 per thousand for certain categories of workers in the Belgian Congo. The questions and debates in the Chamber initiated by the Brussels Representatives regarding the position of the natives in the Congo have recently prompted Ortis to send a letter to the Minister for the Colonies in which he asserts that his data is incontestable.

The Negroes in the French and the Belgian Colonies earn on the average from 60 to 80 centimes a day plus very bad food (rice, vegetable oil and salt). If the cost of food is also included, then as Walters points out in one place the wage is 2 fr. 15 centimes, or in other words, a Negro working here gets for a whole day's work as much as an unskilled worker in the metropolis is paid for one hour's work. Apart from the story the foregoing figures tell, both Gide and Londres give excellent descriptions of the onerous living and working conditions of the Negroes.

Londres describes the construction of the Brazzaville-Ocean Railroad which connects outlying parts of the continent with the ocean;

"I have seen how railroads were built in other places. I have seen how special equipment and materials were prepared beforehand for the laying of the road. But here, the Negro is used instead of machinery, instead of everything else in fact. He takes the place of the machine, the motor-lorry, the crane. And were it only possible he would be used instead of explosives too!

In order to shift a barrel of cement weighing 130 kgr. the "Batignolles" Construction Co. uses as its equipment a stick and the heads of two negroes. I found here two other very modern instruments---the hammer and the pick. In Mayombi we intend to dig a tunnel with these instruments!

"The Negroes died like flies. Of the 8,000 that came to Batignolles only 5,000 were soon left, and then 4,000, and later 1,700. New recruits had to take their places. But what was happening among the Negroes?

"As soon as the whites made preparations for the road the cry of "Machine" went up everywhere (this is how the Negroes call the Railroad). The Negroes knew that the whites had gone to find more people to build the railroad. They ran away. "You yourselves taught us---they told the missionaries---that we must not commit suicide, but to go on the "machine" means death". They sought refuge in the forests, of the Chad Coast in the Belgian Congo. In districts that were once inhabited by people the recruiting agents only found the Chimpanzee. Can you build the Brazzaville-Railroad with monkeys? We started to hunt the Negroes. Our men caught them as best they could with the help of lassoes, etc. We put "collars" on them as they are called here. Afterwards repressions were started. Entire villages were punished.

"The human material recruited this way was not of the best. Since transport and supplies were not improved, the death rate increased. The barges that brought them in could well be called funeral biers, and common cemeteries soon sprang up around the working places. The group working in Gribing lost 75% of their number. Of 2250, only 429 persons returned to Mikula Kasaka. Of 174 persons recruited in Duego on the Sango River, 80 got as far as Brazzaville and 69 to the place of work. Three months later only 36 were left!

"The death-rate was just as high among the other groups! We must reckon with a loss of 6 to 8,000 people", said Governor General Antonnetti ---or give up the railroad."

"But the number of victims was greater. To-day it already exceeds 17,000 and there is still 300 kilometres to go."



"The Negroes are treated as if they were oxen. Any administrator will tell you that transportation is the scourge of Africa. The portages kill children and undermine the health of adults. They dull the minds of the men and women and degrade them to the level of animals. The whites defended this with the words: "we shall compel them to make the roads---it's for their own good. True the portages are killing them, but when the roads are built they will not need to carry any more." But they are still carrying to this day!

"Wherever we should have worked to extend the settlements, we have depopulated the districts and laid them waste. Woodcutters in the human forest"

What is the result? A threatening and dangerous situation:

"During the course of three years: (1) 600,000 natives migrated to the Gold Coast (British Colony); (2) 2,000,000 natives went to Nigeria; (3) 10,000 natives do not live in the Kraals but in the bush (that is all that is left them!) on the Ivory Coast.

"They are running away: (1) from the army recruiting agents; (2) from the recruiting agents for the railroad companies and from (3) individual offers to work in the forests."

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"Here are a thousand Negroes marching along in Indian file with loads on their heads. They are going to Tafir to build the railroad on the Ivory Coast. Seven hundred kilometres. Supplies? They will find them on the road if God pleases! This caravan will be on the road a month before it reaches its destination. How these slaves keep in step! If anyone is left on the road, the gap is soon filled up. The file becomes shorter.

"They could easily be transported by motor; 20 days could be saved and in all probability as many lives. Pay lorries? Wear out tyres? and burn gasoline? The funds would never hold out! The Negroes are fat enough to stand it!"

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"Once against the forest resounds. Two hundred Negroes are tugging at a big tree just cut down. It is going to serve as a support for the bridge. No ropes, no chains are used, only the hands of the Negroes. The trunk does not move.....

"The foreman shouts 'one, two, three!' and suddenly in a fit of hysteria runs along the trunk that has to be lifted and lashes the backs of the poor men already doubled up under the load....

"Since the trunk did not budge an inch, the foremen threw themselves on these naked people, kicking them and hitting them with their fists."

"The foreman and the guards kept on hitting the Negroes as hard as they could, and the Negroes as it were by reflex action hit the rock harder."

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"I always have a stick ready in my hand, said one of the white foremen to Londres. You cannot work any other way here.... It is a hard thing to say, but machines cannot displace the Negro. You would need millions. There is nothing better than the "Banana-motor"!"

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"Here is a description of the way wages are paid out: 'Z. earned 77 francs a month. The master has paid 88 fr. in taxes for him: 40 fr. poll-tax, 48 fr. in lieu of compulsory labour (as instituted by the Government) and after working a whole month in the forest Z. is to get only 11 francs

"Bernhardt, the manager, decided to deduct only 50 fr. this month. Z. gets 38 francs and says "Thank you."

"But, Bernhardt, if they are sent to work in the forest they cannot put in their compulsory work. Why do they have to pay 48 francs when they are compelled to do other work?"



"Oh!---replies Bernhardt---that's specially for the Negro. The whites don't need to understand anything here."

Continuing his description of the way wages are paid out, Londres in conclusion remarks ruefully: one month's suffering in the jungle, and instead of being paid---they get into debt? The organisation of labour in Africa still leaves much to be desired!

André Gide writes in his "Voyage to the Congo": On the road we met a party of women mending the road. These ~~un~~fortunate creatures were working in a heavy downpour. Many of them without leaving their work were nursing their children at the breast. Every 20 metres or so along the road, there were big holes running to a depth of 3 metres, and here WITHOUT ANY PROPER INSTALLATIONS OR INSTRUMENTS (Gide's italics) these poor creatures were scraping the sand out with their hands to level the road. Not infrequently the undermined earth would slide down in heavy falls burying the women and the children working underneath in the excavations. Many told us about it."

Here is what we read in another place:

"All the women from morning to night are dragging earth to the road; sometimes they have to go to fetch it a long way off. They have nothing with which to dig the earth, which is carried in baskets on their heads. Quite a large number of the women were nursing children. This explains the high-mortality-rate and the progressive depopulation.

"This work is compulsory. It is done instead of paying the tax fixed by the Government. These women workers get nothing whatever for their toil."

"Natives who do not gather sufficient rubber are fined 40 francs. i.e. all they can ever earn in a month."

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"Once," the author relates, "a native crept into his tent and taking him for the chief of the caravan begged him to defend him. It appeared that six days ago the administrator of the Boda District charged Lieutenant Yambo to start repressive measures against the inhabitants of a village whose only crime was that they had refused to leave their huts and fields, which for some reason were needed by the company in that area. A punitive expedition of three gendarms commanded by Lieutenant Yambo started out, and in every village that they passed they took two or three of the males. Chained together, the prisoners were brought to Bodenbergs, and the executions began. Twelve men were tied to a tree, but the chief managing to escape. Yambo and his soldiers shot down these innocent people after which many women were flogged and beaten. Still dissatisfied, Yambo ordered his men to get five children who were thrown into a hut which was burned to the ground. According to Yambo, the chief who managed to escape, this incident cost 32 people their lives.

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The imperialists claim that their mission is to civilise the colonies. They always point to the cultural mission of the "white man". But the foregoing facts illustrate what their mission really means. The working and living conditions of the natives are incredible. They are ground down and mown down by the white settlers. The system of labour in the colonies is actually slavery instituted and legalised by the State. The French and Belgian capitalists strive to justify forced labour with a plethora of juridical formulas about "forced labour" taking the place of tax. In their reply to the contemplated Draft International Convention on the question of "Forced Labour" as proposed by the League of Nations Labour Office, the Belgian and French Governments define the meaning of Forced Labour as follows:

"All labour, work, carried out against the will of the individual...



with the exception of labour for any sanction as a result of financial or civil liabilities.<sup>o</sup> This formula legalises the present state of affairs. It shows that like the imperialists everywhere, the French and Belgian bourgeoisie have no intention of giving up "compulsory labour" and thus reconcile themselves to any reduction of their colonial profits. The abrogation of compulsory labour would knock the bottom out of the whole colonial system, which can only be smashed by the struggle of all the workers and the oppressed peoples throughout the world against Imperialism and Capitalism.

MICHELSON.

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# THE CONDITIONS OF THE NATIVES IN EAST AFRICA. .....

British East Africa consists of: Kenya, Zanzibar, Uganda, North Rhodesia and Tanganyika.

East Africa has a fertile and well irrigated soil. It is rich in coal and copper mines. However, the basic significance of East Africa for Great Britain is not only the fact that it provides the British industry with raw materials, but besides, also serves as a profitable market for Britain for exporting its capital and manufactures.

The invasion of East Africa by the British took place under the pretence of struggling against the slave trade. After having reinforced its power over there, the British declared the land to be the property of the Government (in 1898); the natives were only granted the right to rent their lands (with the exception of Uganda, where the natives preserved the right to possess land), besides, the best plots of land were handed over to the Europeans, while those which were absolutely not fit for cultivation were left to the Negroes. And while the density of the population comprises on the average 12 persons to one sq. mile, and hundreds of fertile soil remains uncultivated, some of the lands allotted to the natives are so thickly populated that these lands are not even able to feed them. Is it any wonder, then, that as the result of British Rule, a country which formerly had a surplus of grain, is at the present frequently experiencing periods of famine; that the country which formerly exported its grain is forced to import it today?

Capitalism in East Africa has sprung up only recently; 35 years ago there were no railroads there, no mines nor factories. Hired labour was also unknown at that time. The native would cultivate his land, pasture his cattle and from time to time, together with the other members of his tribe, fulfil his public duties on the laying and cleaning of roads, building of primitive bridges, etc.; to this work they would be sent upon orders of the Chief of their tribe.

The Europeans already at the very beginning were faced with the problem of labour power for cultivating the vast areas seized by them. To import labourers into Africa would cost too dear; Besides, it seemed rather inexpedient to bring in workers not used to the tropical climate. And the Government made up its mind to do everything possible for compelling the natives to work for the Europeans. "We consider the only method for forcing the natives to leave their reserves and seek work to be---taxation. Only in this way the cost of living will go up and consequently, a stimulus will be created for the natives to offer their labour". Such were the words of one of the Governors of Kenya, in a speech made by him in 1913, and this shows quite plainly the reason for the brutal tax oppression under which the native population of Africa is languishing.

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<sup>o</sup>) Forced Labour. League of Nations, International Labour Office, 1930.



27.

In the different regions of East Africa the taxes (poll and hut), were in 1924 approximately as follows: from 2/- to 9/- per year in Tanganyika, from 2 to 7/- 6 in the North East, from 2 to 10/- in North West Rhodesia, from 12 to 15/- in Uganda and from 12 to 20/- in Kenya. In the Buganda region (Uganda), the native cotton-growers pay 15/- per year to the British Government, 10/- to the landowner, and to the native authorities, for freeing them from obligatory public work---10/-. Altogether he pays 35/- per year.

Usually the amount of taxes is fixed in such a way, that the native is quite unable to pay the amount from the money earned by him from the cultivation of his land.

The following are some examples:

The whole agricultural output of the natives in Kenya amounted in 1924 to £546,000; while the amount of taxes paid out by them amounted to £876,000. The general income of a native cotton-grower amounts to about £6-7 per year (the large native output of cotton is to be found in Uganda and partially in Tanganyika), while the tax (from the whole of the population including children), reaches the sum of 4½/- per head.

According to other sources (See "White Capital and Coloured Labour") the average cost of agricultural products for each family equals to 70-90/- per year, out of which the goods output equals to not more than 30 shillings. The taxes swallow up one-third of the income of the family. Counting only the adult and able-bodied male workers, the amount of taxes comprises 25/- per year; and if we were to figure the number of male workers working for hire (approximately 15% of all the able bodied men workers of the tribe), the amount for one hired labourer will reach 13/8d. per month. The maximum wages earned on the estates in the locality to which we refer here, amount to 12/- in cash besides food. Consequently, when the tax for a whole family has to be paid from the sum earned by the natives working for hire, their earnings cannot even suffice to pay their tax. When a hired labourer pays only for himself, during the course of one year, he pays out 2 months of his wages for taxes.

In 1922 the average wage in Kenya amounted to £6.10 per year, i.e. almost 11/- per month; while the majority received only 8/- per month. The cost of the food given to the workers amounts to £5 per year, or 6/- per month (1924); at the same time food for one European in Kenya amounts to about £5 per month. Consequently, receiving 8/-, the worker is not able to provide even for a small family.

In 1924 in the Province of Kikuyu (Kenya), wages, according to data of the Private Recruiting Agency, amounted to 8/- per month, besides food. This rate is a little higher than the pre-war level, in spite of the fact that prices in Kenya during this time have doubled, and taxes went up by one and a half times.

Wages for particularly heavy work as for example, for building roads, etc., are higher: 14 to 18/- per month. A small group of highly skilled workers whom it is difficult to replace, are paid £5 per month. In the Kisumu Docks, where there is a sharp shortage of labour power, the workers succeeded in getting the 8-hour working day and a raise in wages to 18/- per month with additional raises every six months by 2/-. Besides, they get a food ration, consisting of 1½ pounds of meat and 1 pound of potatoes once every week. This is the biggest pay received by natives in East Africa for the most difficult work.

According to the Annual Report of the Native Labour Department in 1928 in Kenya there were on the average 135,023, or 30.03% of the whole adult able-bodied male population. Besides, during the harvest 4,600 women and 17,300 children were working, doing some of the more easy work.

Wages of the agricultural unskilled workers were about 12-14 shillings per month, besides food. The plantation workers and the majority of the labourers occupied on the building of railways in charge of the Public Works Department, received 16-18 shillings per month, besides



food; women---10-12/-, and children---6-8/- (besides food). (Information Sociale, April 7, 1930).

According to the data of the census of 1929, out of 83,020 male workers occupied on the European plantations in Nyassa, 19,411 got less than 6/- per month and 60,639---from 6-20 shillings. In the official report concerning railway construction in Nyassa (1929), it is referred to the small labour productivity of the natives, which is explained by their becoming quickly exhausted owing to their continually not getting sufficient nourishment. In the same report it is said that even the prisoners in the Central prison are fed better than the native workers (Revue Internationale du Travail, May 1930).

In view of the fact that the natives are inclined to leave work just as soon as they earn a sum sufficient to pay their taxes the Government of East Africa issued a number of laws, supposed to regulate the relations between the labourers and the landlords and define the terms for hiring workers and punish any who may leave the job before the end of the term agreed upon. Generally, these terms are from about 2 to 8 months. When hiring workers for a term of more than one month, the agreement is signed in the presence of an Government official. If a labourer fails to fulfil the agreement, he is subject of imprisonment. Owing to the absence of any sort of native organisations, in whose name collective negotiations with regard to labour conditions could be conducted, the workers, when closing their individual agreements, have no means for protecting themselves from the employers mistreating them in any way they please.

In order to compel the natives to go to work outside, those who remain at home in Nyassa are forced to pay a double tax as compared to those who work for the Europeans.

It must be said that there is no way of getting out of paying the taxes in East Africa, for the natives are attached to the land of their tribes, and from which they have the right to leave only if hired by Europeans. According to the registration law, every native worker is obliged to have a certificate with the imprint of his thumb. Anyone who runs away from his landlord is thrown into prison either as a deserter or as a vagabond. Only for 1922 there were 3,872 natives sentenced to different terms for not having paid their hut taxes, etc., and 2,674---for having violated the registration law of the native population.

However, in spite of all the Government measures noted above the shortage of labour power is not being liquidated, and as a source of supplying labour power in East Africa, the Institute of Forced Labour has been sanctioned.

Workers are recruited by force with the help of the chiefs of tribes, who are serving and getting salaries from the British Government; besides, the Europeans also have the advantage owing to the tradition already mentioned by us of natives doing collective public work upon the orders of the tribal chiefs, and which to a significant degree facilitated the compulsory recruitment of natives. Another form of forced labour is the labour of those who are in the prisons and concentration camps, for which the men get no pay whatever, and where they are sent to for violating the rules of hunting for game of the different limitations for fishing, the rules for the protection of game, for infringing upon the rules for trespassing upon strange territory, if not to mention the violation the masters and servants laws. All of this gives rise to the wide possibilities for getting free labour power.

And so, the chain has been completely locked. All the links are there! At first the African natives are deprived of their land, their only source for existence, and, with the help of taxes, from which they can in no way be freed, are compelled to close agreements with the European boss to become "voluntarily hired" workers. Should it happen that the native refuses to close such an agreement despite of everything, he can at any rate be compelled to do forced labour and be paid less than the worker who offers his services voluntarily. If he violates his agreement,--- and this agreement practically always requires that the



native leave his home for the sake of a miserable wage and toil in the most horrible conditions--he is looked for and found with the help of the registration system, after which he is sent to the concentration camp, where he is forced to work without any pay whatever.

Beginning with 1921 forced labor has been officially applied only on public construction works, during the building of railroads and roadways, etc. In actual fact, however, forced labor has been used all along and is used to-day also by private persons.

In 1922, for work on the railroads, voluntarily hired workers were paid 14/- a month and forced laborers---12/-. In 1923 voluntary laborers earned on the railroad construction works 16/- a month, and forced laborers---14/-. The death-rates among the first comprised 1.34 to every 1,000 per month, among the second---2.25.

"The above data", writes the author of the pamphlet, 'British Imperialism in East Africa', "are to a sufficient degree characteristic for the railway construction works. At times the number of sick and the death rates are smaller; at times, during epidemics or if the conditions happen to be exclusively bad, it is higher. In one case, when the Spanish influenza raged, there were 10.6 deaths to every thousand persons per month."

The widespread contagious diseases among the natives are to a great extent the result of the horrible conditions of transporting the workers and their miserable housing conditions in which they are forced to live by their bosses.

The workers are being driven from place to place in flocks; many of them are as a rule ill and leave behind them the disease germs. In Nairobi and Mombassa the workers are sent to premises over-crowded with people, where it is worse even than in the worst kind of night-lodgings in the European cities.

The miserable labor conditions and widespread diseases, for which the British bear the full responsibility, lead to the gradual depopulation of the natives in East Africa, and even the white colonisers have lately come to realise that no matter how good the system of forced labor may be, the dying-out and infected with disease masses will not be able to continue to supply them with the necessary amount of labor power for ever".

M.K.

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#### CONDITIONS OF THE NATIVES IN WEST AFRICA.

British West Africa is comprised of Gambia (the oldest of the British possessions in West Africa), Sierra-Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria. The Britishers first appeared on the West African Coast more than 300 years ago, attracted by the advantages of the slave trade, and eventually had significantly depopulated the region. In 1787, owing to this catastrophical consequence of the slave trade, which threatened to bring a shortage of native labor power, Britain began to reimport freed slaves into West Africa, settling them on the territory of Sierra Leone, obtained from one of the native chiefs. On the pretence of maintaining peace among the different tribes, the British gradually invaded new and new districts, enlarging in this way their possessions in Sierra-Leone.

On the Gold Coast the British settled as far back as the end of the Seventeenth Century. In 1900-1901 they obtained 4,000 mining concessions from the native chiefs, and gold industrial enterprises of modern type were established.

In Nigeria the invasion of the British first took place in 1862, which was carried out under the pretence of struggling against the slave trade. The British trading firms immediately started the exchange of products with the natives: they exchanged alcohol, fire-arms, and other articles manufactured in Europe for the local products---cocoanut, palm oil, etc



(cocoa and palm oil together comprise 60% of the whole export from West Africa; the Gold Coast provides about 50% of the total world production of cocoa).

Having settled in West Africa, the British, however, did not deprive the natives of their land, as was done by them in their East-African possessions. This policy was pursued because of the necessity to develop the native agricultural industry and increase the output of the natural products of the country which could be done only by the natives as the exclusively harmful tropical climate prevents the development of European colonisation; in East Africa, for example, there are elevated places where the climate is much more temperate than in the valleys, and where it is possible for Europeans to live; this, however, is not the case in West Africa.

The agricultural industry is chiefly in the hands of the small native farmers. About three-fourths of the tilling population of West Africa is occupied with peasant labor (both agriculture as well as gathering the fruit of the wild trees). The products of the peasant is being bought by the British firms at exceedingly low prices, the latter reaping tremendous profits when selling these articles in Europe. In spite of the fact that the prices on imported products from West Africa are steadily going up on the European markets, the natives are being paid less and less, so that the native peasant, in order to keep up his usual standard of living, is compelled to continually increase his output. Simultaneously with the decreased rates of pay for the products of the African peasant, imported goods which are continually required by the peasant have greatly increased in price. Thus, for example, for English cotton goods one had to pay in 1920 four times more than in 1913, while 1 ton of palm oil one sold in 1918 by £3.18/- cheaper than before the war; 1 ton of palm kernel---by £2 10/- 10. cheaper; cocoa---by £1 7/ 8. cheaper, etc.

While the exploitation of the native peasant, who is chiefly occupied in the agricultural industry, is effected by way of the exchange of products, in the mining industry (in Northern Nigeria tin is produced, in Southern---coal, on the Gold Coast---gold, manganese, diamonds), where the British capitalists rule (up till the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century gold was obtained in West Africa by the natives themselves), the native workers are cruelly exploited.

The following is the way hired labor is paid in the different branches of the mining industry:

The minimum wage in the tin pits, in which 23,400 workers are occupied, equals to 1d. per hour, or about 4/- for a 48-hour working week. The average wage is 1/- per day.

On the Gold Coast, in the gold fields, where nearly 10,000 workers are occupied, wages reach 1½/- to 2/- for a 9-hour working day.

In the coal industry in 1926 unskilled surface workers were paid ¾/- per day and underground workers 1/- per day.

A very widespread occupation in West Africa is portering. The porters carry great weights on their heads, covering long distances. In Sierra-Leone alone there are 18,000 porters, working for private persons, and a large number of them are being hired by Government and other institutions. Such a carrier makes from 12 to 18 miles per day with loads of 45-50 pounds on his head. They earn from 1-1½/- per day.

In West Africa the wages are generally paid in money daily or weekly. But in some of the pits and in the majority of the forestry concessions exists the system of using native-contractors, who hire workers on conditions that wages will be paid to them after the term of six months, when the contractor will finish his job and get paid by the concessioner. Until the six months are up the worker merely gets some small sums for food; besides the workers are to buy their food on the local market only, which is usually in the hands of the same contractor, who is interested in raising the market prices, so that by the time the worker will have to receive his money, there is very little or nothing left for him to get. The concessioner pays the contractor a certain sum of money for the work produced.



The extent to which the native laborers are being exploited by British capital can be judged by the colossal profits received by the British capitalists in West Africa.

Thus, the ROPP TIN Co., Ltd., paid out 50% of its dividends in 1913, 60% in 1919, 80% in 1924, and 65% in 1925; beginning with 1913 up to 1925 the shareholders received 820% profits on their capital. The Kadun Syndicate paid during the period of 1917-1920 435% on its invested capital. Four of the companies for working up the tin mines sold each ton of tin in 1925 with a profit of 64%; in the other 36% of the selling price, 22% comprised wages. If we figure it up in working hours, we see that out of every 8 hours' work put in by the miner in the tin mines of Nigeria, more than 6 hours he works on the employer while only about 2 hours for himself. In other words, for every pence earned by the worker, more than 3 pence go into the pocket of the employer.

The supply of native labor power is becoming greater, because of the increase cost of living which results in the peasant family being able to preserve its former standard of living only by having one or more members of the family work for wages at the European enterprises.

However, in some of the districts the influx of labor power is insufficient to satisfy the demands of the industry. To stimulate the supply special taxes are being levied and in Northern Nigeria, for example, the following system of taxation is applied: the peasants are taxed to the amount of 10% of the gross receipts, which amounts to approximately 25% of the net profits, while wage laborers are only paying 3 1/3% of their average wages (1/- per month with an average wage, as we indicated above, of 1/- per day). Naturally, in this way "voluntary" offers of native labor is stimulated! "The Government taxes them (the natives) with a yearly tax", wrote one of the mineowners of Northern Nigeria, "and the natives understand that the easiest way to pay such a tax is to get the necessary money by working for wages instead of selling their goats or products of their farms. Undoubtedly, the Government does its best (what it should really do), to supply the necessary amount of labor".

Forced labor is openly used in West Africa to a very limited degree, namely, merely for keeping in order the land and water transport lines, and in some of the provinces also for railway construction; however, the heavy taxes are sufficient for guaranteeing the employers with the necessary number of workers.

B. Smith.

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